

VZCZCXRO8606
RR RUEHAST RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHVEN #0196/01 2111408
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 291408Z JUL 08
FM USMISSION USOSCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5866
INFO RUCNOSC/ORG FOR SECURITY CO OP IN EUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 USOSCE 000196

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IT](#) [CZ](#) [BU](#) [RO](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: OSCE DISCUSSES ROMA/SINTI INTEGRATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary and Comment: On July 10-11, the OSCE and civil society representatives discussed Roma and Sinti Integration, highlighting the need for increased Roma/Sinti participation, taking an integrated approach to addressing the root causes of discrimination, and more comprehensive data collection. Discriminatory practices in Italy sparked an impromptu NGO protest and a side event on the same issue elicited only a weak Italian governmental response. The meeting was useful in reviewing limited progress on the implementation of the Roma/Sinti Action plan and highlighted that there remains a clear lack of political will from many participating States for full implementation. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (U) The OSCE held the second of three annual Supplementary Human Dimension meetings (SHDM) in Vienna on July 10-11, 2008 to discuss Sustainable Policies for Roma and Sinti Integration. Participants included representatives from participating States and civil society. The working sessions discussed the role and responsibility of regional and local authorities, good practices at the local level, and policies that facilitate equal access to public services. The meeting also included three side events on recent European Court of Human Rights judgments, building partnerships between Roma communities and local authorities, and fundamental rights and freedoms of Roma in Italy.

Civil Society Recommends Advisory Councils

¶3. (U) At a civil society roundtable side event, Roma/Sinti civil society representatives shared concerns about the lack of political will in implementing the OSCE Roma/Sinti Action Plan. Their recommendations, presented to the participating States at the opening sessions, included encouraging increased participation of Roma/Sinti in decision making such as through the establishment of Roma Advisory Councils, encouraging disaggregated data collection, and implementing existing commitments, laws, action plans.

Experts Agree

¶4. (U) At the first working session on the role and responsibility of regional and local authorities to assist in integrating Roma, Dr. Joachim Ott, Coordinator of the Roma Action Group from the European Commission, outlined the need for targeted activities that take an integrated approach linking housing, education, discrimination, and other issues affecting the integration of Roma. He advocated Roma involvement at all stages of the decision making process at the local, regional, and national levels and asked the OSCE to hold countries accountable at the next Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw.

Sharing of Best Practices Encouraged

¶5. (U) The second working session discussed good practices and major challenges in improving the situation of Roma at

local levels with examples from municipalities. Mr. Juan Ramon Vilchez-Enriquez presented Catalonia as a success story outlining an Interdepartmental Commission and a Roma People's Advisory Council whose projects addressed education, health, and cultural mediation. Recommendations from the working session included the establishment of a data base on best practices, integrating programs, appointing qualified Roma to public offices, supporting capacity building efforts for local authorities and NGOs, and encouraging local authorities to provide transport to schools as well as waiving school registration fees when necessary. While examples from municipalities were cited as good models, it was acknowledged that one formula cannot be universally applied.

Access to Education and Social Services Needed

¶6. (U) The third working session discussed policies to facilitate equal access of Roma/Sinti to public services with particular emphasis on social services and education. Ms. Eva Rizzin called for the integration of the Romani language and history into the curricula for Roma and non-Roma children in order to facilitate cultural mediation. Participants frequently emphasized that disadvantages for Roma children start before kindergarten, underscoring the importance of pre-K education. While education was cited as important, many remarked that it is not a "silver bullet" or "magic cure" and that approaches to integrating Roma/Sinti must link education with other issues, including housing.

Italian Fingerprinting Sparks NGO Protest

USOSCE 00000196 002 OF 002

¶7. (U) Roma NGO representatives erupted in a spontaneous demonstration at the July 10 opening session. The NGOs held up photographs and called for Italy to discontinue its policy of mass fingerprinting of Roma. The room broke out in applause following the unscheduled intervention.

¶8. (U) Later, at a side event on the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of Roma in Italy, NGO representatives offered stirring testimonies on the state of the Roma population in Italy. One ethnic Roma activist described the beating by Italian police of a young Roma girl, winner of a UNICEF painting competition, and her family; the refusal of two schools in Milan to register fifty Roma students; and the Italian government's requirement that Roma who accept government-assisted housing sign a contract stating that they will have no visitors. A representative of the Italian government acknowledged that the Roma face poor living conditions in Italy but did not accept blame. When pressed about the Italian ordinance calling for the mass fingerprinting of Roma, the Italian representative denied the claim, stating that the fingerprinting is not directed towards a specific ethnic group but rather at individuals who do not have permanent residence in Italy.

Judicial Remedies for Roma Outlined

¶9. (SBU) A side event on the Effective use of the European Court of Human Rights judgments focused on two court cases - the D.H. and others v. Czech Republic and the Hadereni case from Romania. In the first case, the court ruled against the Czech government's apparent policy of segregation of Roma children into remedial schools. The representative from the European Human Rights Center complained that the subsequent disbanding the remedial schools has led to largely cosmetic improvements. The Czech representative from the Office of the Council for Roma Community Affairs privately agreed with this assessment. In the Hadereni case the court ruled that Roma face systematic discrimination in the judicial system and the ruling resulted in judiciary reform in Romania though there continue to be problems in implementation.

Local Partnerships Highlighted

¶10. (U) A side event on building partnerships between Roma communities and local authorities was poorly attended probably because it was held at the same time as the event on Roma in Italy. NGOs in Albania, Italy, and Bulgaria reiterated the persistent problems of child trafficking, high drop out and illiteracy rates which lead to high unemployment rates, and poor living conditions faced by the Roma/Sinti populations. NGOs presented peer educator programs where youth are trained to help street children and their families navigate the education and public services systems. A Bulgarian Roma activist described his efforts to get Roma issues into the local budget by getting elected to the City Council.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: The meeting was useful in evaluating the limited implementation of the Roma/Sinti Action plan and in highlighted some successes and good practices. According to most interlocutors, many participating states still lack the political will to address key issues of Roma integration. Italy was roundly criticized for its Roma policies, especially its fingerprinting program but was unapologetic. End Comment.
SCOTT